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ABSTRACT

Every year the American Association of Employment in Education (AAEE) conducts a survey of the status of teacher supply and demand in the United States. In 2001, the 25th annual survey sent a survey instrument to 1,265 teacher preparation institutions to study the supply side of teacher availability, and responses were received from 494 institutions (39%). Data were analyzed by the Research and Data Analysis Consultation Service at The Ohio State University. Data indicated that there are significant shortages in the supply of K-12 teachers and administrators. The survey indicates that 23.81% of the 63 teaching fields studied have a considerable shortage, especially English as a Second Language, special education, and bilingual education. Data indicate that 42.86% of fields experience some shortage. Results show that 33.33% of the teaching fields experience balanced supply and demand. These are generally larger fields, such as elementary education, and some specialized areas, like journalism, business education, and the arts. None of the fields fell into the categories of some or considerable surplus. Up-to-date and accurate information about teacher shortage and surplus is important for policy making and educational planning. (Contains 2 tables and 17 references.) (SLD)

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CURRENT STATUS OF TEACHER SHORTAGE IN THE UNITED STATES

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Current Status of Teacher Shortage in the United States

While issues such as certification tests for teachers or how to improve teacher quality have been part of a national discussion, teacher shortage has become one of the biggest concerns of education policymakers in the United States. More than a decade ago, the National Education Association (NEA, 1987) warned of the predicted problem of a shortage of teachers. The American Association of Employment in Education (AAEE), as a part of an annual study of teacher supply and demand reports that teacher supply and demand is uneven nationwide, with some states having teacher shortage whereas others having teacher surplus (AAEE, 1999; Bradley, 1999). This study reports on the most recent AAEE annual survey (2001) of the status of teacher supply and demand in the United States.

Teacher supply is defined as "the number of individuals with the minimal requirements (usually four years of college), who are willing to supply their services as teachers..." (NEA Data Search, 1989, p. 8). The supply includes currently employed teachers and entering or reentering teachers who apply to open positions or who would apply when openings existed. Teacher demand is defined as "the total number of teaching positions funded by local education agencies (LEAs), i. e., the number that LEAs are able and willing to employ at a given time" (Boe and Gilford, 1992, p. 24). There are a variety of factors that determine teacher demand including number of students enrolled, policies regarding the curriculum and teacher-student ratios, and funding capacity of LEAs. Teacher shortage occurs when the number of existing qualified teachers is less than the number of teaching openings (NEA Data Search, 1989).

It must be emphasized that the issue of teacher supply and demand is more complex than ever thought because there are many factors affecting this issue. Existing literature and annually

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produced reports by the American Association for Employment in Education (AAEE, 1999) identified a number of factors including teacher retirement (both regular and early), subject area shortages, teacher turnover, region of the country, class size, student population changes, the reserve pool, salary, and educational reform.

Retirement of teachers, including both early and routine retirements, has been reported as the most significant factor influencing future teacher employment (AAEE, 1998, 1999; Pipho, 1998). Baker and Smith (1997) reported that 31 percent of the public school teachers left the profession to retire. Other reasons for leaving were pregnancy/child rearing, family or personal move, and dissatisfaction with the profession. Bandeira de Mell and Broughman (1996) reported that more than 24 percent of elementary and secondary teachers would be expected to retire in next decade because of the number of teachers more than 50 years of age. However, these expectations would turn out incorrect because teacher retirement is not only dependent on age. Many retirement decisions are based on general economic conditions, general working conditions, and communication with the administrators (NEA, 1987).

Many educational reform initiatives suggest smaller class size and more classes in general to increase the quality of teaching and learning. However, this results in requirements of more teachers in the field. The 1997-1999 reports of AAEE identified smaller class sizes and school improvement as among the top five factors affecting teacher supply demand (AAEE, 1999).

Moreover, increases in demand and decreases in supply have formed shortages in a number of areas and teaching fields. In the 1980s, teacher shortages appeared in areas such as bilingual education, special education, physics, chemistry, mathematics and computer science. After that, areas such as biology, general science, industrial arts, foreign languages and positions

like school psychologist, elementary guidance counselor, and librarian have been added to the list (Darling-Hammond and Cobb, 1996). In addition, special education fields have been identified as in great demand of teachers by AAEE annual surveys during the three-year period of 1997-1999 (AAEE, 1999). The attrition rate of special education teachers is reported to be higher than the attrition of general education teachers in terms of public school teaching and transfer among public schools (Boe, Bobbitt, and Cook, 1997). The AAEE 1999 report suggested that schools, colleges, and departments of education should play a significant role in terms of recruiting students to apply to high demanded programs.

Although most of the researchers agree that two million teachers will be needed during the next ten years, some argued that the teacher shortage alarm is speculative. For example, Feistritzer (1999) stated that there is a large teacher pool and alternative certification programs, and thus teacher shortage is not a big problem. However, focusing on nationwide numbers of teachers may be misleading because demand for teachers varies widely among and within regional geographical areas (AAEE, 1997; Bradley, 1999). Rural and urban schools have more difficulty in finding teachers than suburban schools (Gitomer and Latham, 2000). Furthermore, shortages are most serious in the central cities and expanding population regions of the country. On the other hand, the Northwestern and Great Lakes states have had fewest shortages because of declining student enrollments (Association for School, College, and University Staffing, 1984). Therefore, states have started to invoke different policies in order to solve the problem such as hiring retired teachers, alternative certification programs, salary increases or tax reduction, and recruiting teachers from outside of the country (Blair, 1999; Pipho, 1998).

Data showing demand and supply helps policy makers, education agencies, school administrators, students and graduates in teacher education programs, and decision-makers in

colleges and universities. The research presented in this paper provides analysis of the AAEE 2001 data and comparison with the previous 6 years of findings in order to better inform educators about the reported current status of teacher shortage and surplus areas.

Research Questions

1. What is the current status of teacher supply and demand in the United States based on rankings from considerable shortage to considerable demand in 63 teaching fields?
2. What trends are there in those teaching fields across the years of 1996-2001?

Methodology

The 25th annual national AAEE study of teacher supply and demand was conducted in 2001 in order to examine the availability of teachers from the supply side of universities and colleges. A survey instrument was sent to 1,265 teacher preparation institutions listed in the Higher Education Directory to both AAEE and non-AAEE members. Questionnaires were received from 494 institutions representing a response rate of 39 percent. In this study, it is assumed that the opinions and responses of career services directors accurately reflect the K-12 job market. This has been the case in the 24 previous studies.

The *AAEE Teacher Supply/Demand* instrument was composed of items to rate the job market for each of 63 teaching fields on a five-point scale with 1 representing considerable surplus of candidates and 5 representing considerable shortage of candidates. When respondents did not feel that they had adequate information to answer, they left the items blank. These cases were treated as missing data in analysis. After the data were collected and analyzed, the national average score for each field was used to create categories. *Considerable shortage* is defined as an average demand score of 4.21 or greater. When there is an average demand score of 3.41 to

4.20, the teaching field is classified as s*ome shortage*. A field is identified as *balanced* when it has an average demand score of 2.61 to 3.40. Fields categorized as having *some surplus* are those with an average demand score of 1.81 to 2.60. An average demand score of 1.00 to 1.80 is defined as *considerable surplus*. The same instrument with 48 teaching fields was used to collect AAEE data from 1996 to 2000. In the 2001 survey, 3 of the 48 fields were split and additions were made that yielded a total of 63 teaching fields.

The data were analyzed by the Research and Data Analysis Consultation Service at The Ohio State University. Across all 63 teaching fields, there was no statistically significant difference (t-test, $p < .05$) between AAEE and non-AAEE members, thus responses from AAEE and non-AAEE institutions were combined into an overall data set for further analysis. This has been the case in previous years. Data were analyzed in order to help explain the current status of teacher demand in the United States. Moreover, results from this year were compared with the previous years' findings in order to identify trends of teacher demand.

Results

Findings of Current National Study

Data analysis of AAEE 2001 annual survey indicated that there are significant shortages in the supply of K-12 teachers and administrators. Table 1 identifies the 63 teaching fields surveyed and the ranking they received on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 indicating a considerable surplus, 3 indicating balanced supply and demand, and 5 indicating a considerable shortage of educators.

Insert Table 1 here

Considerable shortage (4.21 – 5.00). The survey indicates that 23.81 percent of the 63 teaching fields were identified as having a considerable shortage. Some fields in this category are specialized and designed to meet the special needs of students. These include English as a Second Language (ESL), bilingual education, and all areas of special education. In addition, fields such as mathematics and science, particularly in areas of physics and chemistry, are in considerable shortage.

Some shortage (3.41 – 4.20). The highest percentage (42.86%) of fields are in this category, including technically oriented fields (e.g., biology, general science, earth science, and technology education). Specialized fields like audiologist, school psychologist, counselor, and speech pathologist also appear in this category. Additionally, superintendents, curriculum directors, and principals at all levels are in shortage this year. Fields such as music (general, vocal, and instrumental), agriculture, and languages (Spanish and Japanese) are also in demand.

Balanced Supply and Demand (2.61 – 3.40). Results showed that 33.33 percent of the teaching fields are in this category. It mainly consists of larger fields (e.g., elementary education), different specialized areas (e.g., journalism, business education, art / theatre / dance education), and foreign languages (e.g., French, German). Additionally, social studies education has appeared in this category beginning last year.

Some Surplus (2.60 – 1.81) and Considerable Surplus (1.80 – 1.00). None of the fields fall in this category.

Findings of Six-Year Comparison

Data from the current year are compared with previous years' findings to examine trend over the six years. The difference between 2001 and 1996 national composite scores are calculated in 45 teaching fields and tabulated with each years' composite score (Table 2). Change scores are distributed within a range of –0.50 to 0.98 with a median of 0.44.

Insert Table 2 here

Furthermore, 23 out of 45 teaching fields showed a continuous positive trend over the six years: four of them stay in balanced, seven of them shift towards balanced, and twelve of them move to the shortage category. On the other hand, only one of the teaching fields (speech pathology) exhibited a continuous negative trend toward the some shortage end of the scale. The rest of the fields showed fluctuations over these years but generally with increases in teacher demand across years.

Overall, the national composite ranking of the 45 teaching fields remained relatively stable over these periods, but with a consistent increase toward considerable shortage. However, it must be emphasized that across years teacher demand showed tremendous variations across the 11 regions of the United States (AAEE, 2000). Furthermore, the differences within a region regarding demand in urban, suburban, and rural school settings are not addressed in this study.

Discussion

Teacher shortage is a critical and nationwide issue, which needs to be better understood. Balanced teacher demand and supply is an ideal condition and required for every teaching field and across different regions of the country. However, results from this study confirm that there is a perceived considerable shortage in particular areas such as special education, mathematics and science education, and bilingual education across six years in the United States. In addition, current job market in the United States has no educator fields with some surplus or considerable surplus.

Up-to-date and accurate information of teacher shortage and surplus is important for large audiences including educational policy makers, school and department administrations, university educators, and pre-service teachers to have at their disposal. The shortage and surplus information would help teacher education programs in making decisions about program modifications, adding or deleting programs. Administrators in school systems would use this information while planning for hiring qualified candidates, and counselors while advising future college students. Moreover, students, graduates and career changers could use these data while making career decisions. Teacher supply and demand trends could be criteria for decisions regarding which certification areas to choose or the necessity of seeking dual certification or the need for geographic mobility.

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Table 1
Relative Demand by Teaching Field

Teaching Fields with Considerable Shortage (5.00 – 4.21)	
Special- Emot Dis/Beh Dis	4.66
Special- Severe/Profound D.	4.59
Mathematics Ed.	4.55
Special- Multicategorical	4.53
Special- Mental Retardation	4.49
Special- Visually Impaired	4.48
Special- Learning Disability	4.47
Special- Mild/Mod. Disability	4.44
Science- Physics	4.43
Science- Chemistry	4.42
Special- Hearing Impaired	4.41
Special- Dual Cert.	4.38
Special- Early Childhood	4.35
Bilingual Ed.	4.29
English as a Second Lang.	4.24
Teaching Fields with Some Shortage (4.20 – 3.41)	
Languages- Spanish	4.17
Science- Earth/Physical	4.14
Technology Ed.	4.11
Science- Biology	4.10
Science- General	4.04
Speech Pathologist	4.02
Computer Science Ed.	3.98
Audiologist	3.91
Principal- High School	3.90
Library Science/Media Tech.	3.88
Superintendent	3.85
Principal- Middle School	3.84
Principal- Elementary	3.74
School Psychologist	3.73
School Nurse	3.71
Agriculture Ed.	3.69
Counselor	3.65
Music- Instrumental	3.61
Music- Vocal	3.59
Languages- Japanese	3.54
Reading	3.51
Home Ec./Consumer Sci.	3.51
Music- General	3.48
School Social Worker	3.48
Speech Ed.	3.45
Curriculum Director	3.44
Gifted/Talented Ed	3.42

Table 1 continued

Teaching Fields with Balanced Supply and Demand (3.40 – 2.61)	
Physical Therapist	3.36
Languages- French	3.36
Business Manager	3.36
Elementary – Intermediate	3.35
Languages- Classics	3.31
Occupational Therapist	3.30
Business Ed.	3.28
English/Language Arts Ed.	3.28
Languages- German	3.27
Elementary – Pre-K	3.26
Elementary – Kindergarten	3.22
Elementary -Primary	3.21
Human Resources Director	3.08
Journalism Ed.	3.07
Theatre/Drama Ed.	2.99
Art/Visual Ed.	2.99
Driver Ed./Traffic Safety	2.95
Dance Ed.	2.82
Social Studies Ed.	2.75
Physical Ed.	2.72
Health Ed.	2.67
Teaching Fields with Some Surplus (2.60 – 1.81)	
None	
Teaching Fields with Considerable Surplus (1.80 – 1.00)	
None	
Composite	3.68

* Scale 1 = Considerable surplus; 3 = Balanced; 5 = Considerable demand

Table 2
Demand Means and Change Scores for 45 Teaching Fields (1996-2001)

Field	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	change
Primary	2.2277	2.4400	2.6287	2.8556	3.0181	3.2069	0.9792
Intermediate	2.4070	2.5374	2.7441	3.0000	3.2172	3.3501	0.9431
Kindergarten	2.3209	2.5000	2.6916	2.8897	3.0591	3.2191	0.8982
Pre-K	2.4459	2.5616	2.7207	2.8800	3.1746	3.2633	0.8174
Social Sciences	1.9319	2.0498	2.2908	2.4455	2.7313	2.7481	0.8162
Physical Education	2.0158	2.1184	2.3206	2.5350	2.6048	2.7213	0.7055
Mathematics Education	3.8698	3.8105	4.0000	4.1847	4.4434	4.5472	0.6774
English/Language Arts Education	2.6189	2.6378	2.8106	3.0465	3.2488	3.2843	0.6654
Business Education	2.6734	2.6863	2.8565	3.1573	3.2295	3.2849	0.6115
Library Science/Media Technology	3.2778	3.5217	3.6095	3.6900	3.7980	3.875	0.5972
Agricultural Education	3.1017	3.1667	3.4762	3.5000	3.4262	3.6863	0.5846
Music Education – Vocal	3.0210	3.0204	3.1912	3.3121	3.4688	3.5923	0.5713
General Science	3.4807	3.6433	3.7065	3.8592	3.9135	4.0391	0.5584
Earth/Physical Science	3.5967	3.6974	3.8270	3.9046	4.0814	4.1385	0.5418
Biology	3.5621	3.6171	3.7098	3.8827	4.0385	4.1031	0.5410
Music Education – Instrumental	3.0769	3.1059	3.2530	3.3508	3.5276	3.6076	0.5307
Art/Visual Education	2.4788	2.5333	2.7092	2.7778	2.9035	2.9881	0.5093
Chemistry	3.9156	4.0370	4.0998	4.1671	4.3646	4.4237	0.5081
Counselor Education	3.1553	3.2548	3.2535	3.4010	3.6192	3.6531	0.4978
Health Education	2.2067	2.3122	2.3057	2.4859	2.5644	2.6744	0.4677
Spanish	3.7143	3.7202	3.8579	4.0370	4.1555	4.1702	0.4559
Home Ec./ Family Cons. Science	3.0588	3.0877	3.1495	3.5688	3.5200	3.5114	0.4526
ESL	3.8042	4.0127	3.8902	3.9806	4.1939	4.2449	0.4407
Journalism Education	2.6383	2.6813	2.8022	2.9000	2.9885	3.0694	0.4311
Visually Impaired	4.0690	4.0779	4.1000	4.1818	4.3750	4.4783	0.4093
Reading	3.1053	3.1882	3.2980	3.4253	3.4772	3.5145	0.4092
Dance Education	2.4255	2.4464	2.4792	2.7619	2.8542	2.8222	0.3967
Social Worker (School)	3.0886	3.1290	3.2233	3.2000	3.4719	3.4787	0.3901
Physics	4.0452	4.0898	4.1667	4.2602	4.3954	4.4312	0.3860
Computer Science/Education	3.6309	3.7035	4.0000	4.1364	4.2348	3.9839	0.3530
Technology Education	3.7800	4.0248	4.1616	4.0278	4.1709	4.1140	0.3340
Behavioral Disorders	4.3350	4.2941	4.3908	4.3937	4.5928	4.6554	0.3204
Hearing Impaired	4.0980	4.2059	4.2710	4.2500	4.3678	4.4146	0.3166
French	3.0707	3.0848	3.2365	3.2901	3.4145	3.3626	0.2919
Mentally Handicapped	4.2146	4.1992	4.2275	4.3347	4.4437	4.4924	0.2778
Learning Disability	4.1977	4.2076	4.3027	4.3554	4.4638	4.4684	0.2707
German	3.0148	3.0727	3.0748	3.1553	3.2524	3.2745	0.2597
Driver Education	2.7234	2.5926	2.6296	2.9057	2.8600	2.9535	0.2301
Classics	3.0930	3.1443	3.1667	3.2258	3.3415	3.3077	0.2147
Psychological (School)	3.5475	3.5865	3.5833	3.5113	3.6525	3.7297	0.1822
Gifted/Talented Education	3.2813	3.3558	3.3486	3.5591	3.5567	3.4167	0.1354
Japanese	3.5833	3.5362	3.6024	3.3158	3.5161	3.5385	-0.0448
Bilingual Education	4.3651	4.3417	4.4779	4.3178	4.3810	4.2883	-0.0768
Audiology	4.1200	4.0641	4.1013	3.7284	3.7083	3.9118	-0.2082
Speech Pathology	4.5167	4.3435	4.3684	4.1769	4.0159	4.0182	-0.4985

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